



City of Seattle

Michael McGinn
Mayor

Pete Holmes
City Attorney

Richard Conlin
Council President

April 19, 2011

Dear Honorable Members of the Washington State Senate:

As Seattle's elected Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Attorney, we stand together urging you to concur with the House amendments to SB 5073 and to send the bill to Governor Gregoire.

Medical marijuana has been permitted under Washington state law for more than a decade, but there has never been clarity regarding how medical marijuana is to be produced, processed, and distributed. As a local government, we deal firsthand with the problems this lack of clarity in the law has led to: confusion for law enforcement personnel, a proliferation of dispensaries across the City (at last count we had over 30 in Seattle), an inability to regulate and site them properly, and uncertainty for patients and their doctors about how to act within the confines of the law. In short, the entire system operates in a legal gray zone that serves nobody's interests except those who would exploit the system.

SB 5073, although not perfect, will put in place a comprehensive, consistent, coherent, and rational medical marijuana regulatory system. It spells out precisely how dispensaries and production facilities can operate in a way that provides legitimate patients with medical marijuana, gives local governments the tools we need to help protect the health and safety of our communities, and provides much-needed clarity for law enforcement.

In addition, we view the recent letter from the United States Attorneys as a simple restatement of the Department of Justice's longstanding approach to medical marijuana. As a practical matter, we can look to the fifteen other states where medical marijuana is legal and the six states that have clear dispensary laws. The federal government has never prosecuted a state employee engaged in the implementation or regulation of one of these state laws. Indeed, city and state employees have already been involved with regulating dispensaries even in their current amorphous state--city police officers sometimes visit dispensaries to address neighbor complaints or monitor potential public safety issues, city licensing authorities issue business licenses to dispensaries, and the state Department of Revenue collects sales tax from some dispensaries. We have heard no federal criticism of these regulatory activities and certainly have not received any threats of prosecution.

The question we face is not whether or not we are going to have medical marijuana use in Washington State. The voters already decided that question more than a decade ago. The question we face is whether or not we will have a thoughtful and rational regulatory framework for the production, processing, and distribution of medical marijuana. In its current form SB 5073 provides much needed clarity to this important issue and we urge you to adopt it and send it to the Governor.

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Sincerely,



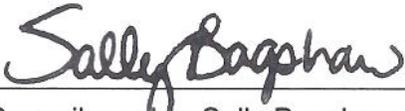
Michael Patrick McGinn
Mayor of Seattle



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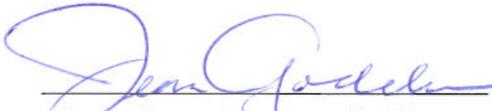
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Tim Burgess
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Sally Clark
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Jean Godden
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Bruce Harrell
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Nick Licata
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Seattle City Council



Councilmember Tom
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